

Page 1, between lines 6 and 7, please insert the following headings and paragraph:

CLAIM FOR PRIORITY

A2 This application claims priority to International Application No. PCT/DE00/02691 which was published in the German language on August 10, 2000.

TECHNICAL FIELD OF THE INVENTION

Please replace the paragraph beginning line 7 of page 1 with the following rewritten paragraph:

A3 The invention relates to a circuit and a method for determining the offset error of a measurement, and in particular, determining the offset error of a measurement that is subject to an offset error of a coil current of an electromagnetic actuator.

Page 1, between lines 11 and 12, please insert the following heading:

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Please replace the consecutive paragraphs beginning at line 12 of page 1 with the following rewritten paragraphs:

A4 Electromagnetic actuators, which for example drive a gas exchange valve of an internal combustion engine, usually have at least one coil. An electromagnetic actuator for gas exchange valves is known, for example, from DE 297 12 502 U1 or EP 0 724 067 A1. It has a rest position, which lies between a closed position and an open position and from which it can be deflected by means of electromagnets.

To open or close a gas exchange valve driven by the actuator, the coil assigned to the respective final position is supplied with current, the required current being greater in the capture phase than in the holding phase, in which the gas exchange valve is held in the final position of the actuator.

If the corresponding electromagnet is provided with current, the valve disk of the gas exchange valve hits the valve seat at high speed, which produces noise and is conducive to wear.

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According to Ohm's law, the current can be calculated from the value of the resistance and the measured voltage drop.

The voltage drop is usually sensed with an analog circuit. In such an analog circuit, an offset error is unavoidable, i.e. the measured voltage is too great or too small. A measuring device which performs an automatic offset voltage compensation is known from DE 34 29 854 A1, but a special hybrid module is required for it, which is relatively expensive. A similarly acting circuit arrangement is known from DE 34 48 182 C2. In this case, a memory module is used for the offset compensation.

Page 2, between lines 14 and 15, please insert the following headings and paragraphs:

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In one embodiment of the invention, there is a method for determining the offset error of a measurement, where the measurement is subject to such an offset error of a coil current of an electromagnetic actuator, comprising measuring the coil current through a corresponding coil when the actuator is in a final position in which the coil is not supplied with current during the operation of the actuator, and providing the value obtained as the offset error.

In another aspect of the invention, the coil current is measured by potential tapping before and after a resistor connected in series with the coil, wherein the potential taps are being fed to a differential amplifier, and a constant value is added to a value output by the differential amplifier.

In another aspect of the invention, the actuator has two coils respectively assigned to the final position, and the coil current through the coil not assigned to the present final position is measured to determine the offset error.

In yet another aspect of the invention, the method includes supplying the coil assigned to the final position with a capture current and a holding current such that the actuator is transferred into the final position.

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In another embodiment of the invention, there is a circuit for determining the offset error of a measurement, the measurement subject to an offset error of a coil current I of an electromagnetic actuator, the circuit comprising at least one coil with a resistor connected in series into a supply line of the coil, a differential amplifier to which the potential on both sides of the resistor is fed, and a control circuit which evaluates the output of the differential amplifier when the coil is not carrying any current during the operation of the actuator, and the value obtained is output as the offset error I_0 .

In another aspect of the invention, wherein the output of the differential amplifier is fed together with the output of a constant-voltage source to an adding element such that an offset error of a specific polarity is obtained.

In another aspect of the invention, the actuator has first and second coils assigned to a final position, and a resistor is connected in the supply line to each coil, the differential amplifier taps the voltage dropping across the resistor, and the control circuit evaluates outputs of the differential amplifiers.

In still another aspect of the invention, the control circuit for supplying current to the first and second coils transfers the actuator into a final position, and the first coil assigned to the final position carries a capture current and a holding current, and the control circuit evaluates the output of the differential amplifier of the second coil.

In another aspect of the invention, the offset error I_0 is determined and low-pass-filtered multiple times.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

An exemplary embodiment of the invention is explained in more detail below with reference to the drawings, in which:

Figure 1 shows a section through an actuator for a gas exchange valve of an internal combustion engine.

Figure 2 shows the time series of the current flow through the two coils of Figure 1.

Figure 3 shows a circuit for sensing the coil current through a coil.

Figure 4 shows the states passed through during the operation of the gas exchange valve in a flow diagram.

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A5DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Please replace the paragraph beginning line 15 of page 2 with the following rewritten paragraph:

A6 The invention relates to a circuit of an electromagnetic actuator and a method for determining the offset error of a measurement that is subject to such an offset error of the coil current of an electromagnetic actuator, with the result that no special modules are required.

Please delete the paragraph beginning at line 22 of page 2 in its entirety.

Please replace the consecutive paragraphs beginning at line 25 of page 2 with the following rewritten paragraphs:

In the invention, there is a final position of the actuator in which a coil is not supplied with current. If the coil current is measured at this point in time, the offset error can be determined.

A7 In the case of an actuator which is used, for example, for driving a gas exchange valve and for opening or closing the gas exchange valve, the coil assigned to the corresponding final position is firstly supplied with a capture current. Then, a holding current is supplied, and the determination of the offset error is preferably performed on that coil which is assigned to the other final position when the coil supplied with current is in the holding phase. This is because, at this point in time, the coil of the circuit for which the offset error is being determined is not supplied with current. In the capture phase, on the other hand, the coil is still briefly supplied with current during the capture phase for the delayed transfer of the actuator into the other final position. Since, for example, the current from its previous holding phase can still decay.

Please delete the paragraph beginning at line 12 of page 3 in its entirety.

Please delete the paragraph beginning at line 15 of page 3 and ending at line 31 of page 3 in its entirety.

Please replace the paragraph beginning line 33 of page 3 with the following rewritten paragraph:

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In order then to be able to use the current through the coil 14, 16 in the control circuit 28, a measurement of the coil current is necessary. A driver circuit used for this purpose is represented, together with a more accurate representation of the control circuit 28, by way of example in Figure 3. Figure 3 shows the driver circuit 26 for the coil 14. The driver circuit 27 is designed in an analogous way.

As shown in Figure 3, the coil 14 is activated by an asymmetric half-bridge. In this case, the coil 14 is connected between a highside FET Th, which on the other hand is connected to the supply voltage Vcc, and a lowside FET Tl, which in turn is connected via a resistor R to the reference potential. Connected in the forward direction between the reference potential and the connecting nodes of the coil 14 to the highside FET Th is a diode D2. Connected in the forward direction between the connecting nodes of the coil 14 to the lowside FET Tl and the supply voltage Vcc is a diode D1. Finally, the supply voltage Vcc is connected to the reference potential via a capacitor C. Between the lowside FET Tl and the reference potential there lies a resistor R.

Please replace the consecutive paragraphs beginning at line 21 of page 7 with the following rewritten paragraphs:

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If the desired current is zero, the highside and lowside FETs Th, Tl are turned off. In this state, no current flows through the resistor R and the voltage at the input of the differential amplifier 30 is zero. On account of the internal construction of the differential amplifier 30, it is possible however for a negative voltage to be present at the output as the result of an offset error.

In the case of a measuring chain of a unipolar construction, as usually used in automotive electrical engineering, however, a negative measuring voltage is undesired. For this reason, an artificially generated offset is added on at the adding node 31. For this purpose, the output of a constant-voltage source 32 is additionally fed to the adding node 31. Consequently, there is a positive voltage present at the input of the filter 33.

For determining the offset error, the resistor R must not be flowed through by a current. This is accomplished for the coil 14 in the holding phase of the other coil 16, since this is the final position in which the coil 14 for the circuit 26 of which the offset error is to be determined is not supplied with current. After determination of the offset error I_o of the non-activated coil,